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Senate

APPROVAL OF YUCCA MOUNTAIN REPOSITORY

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I thank the deputy majority leader for yielding this time to me.

On the floor this afternoon I see three, maybe four Senators--four of whom I have been privileged to serve with in the House of Representatives, one of whom I have just been privileged to serve with for the last year and a half.

The senior Senator from Nevada knows the great affection I hold for him. He and I were elected to the House of Representatives in 1982. We came to Congress together in 1982. We began our first years in the House of Representatives many mornings working out together in the House gym. I have had the privilege of knowing his family and watching his kids grow up. For me, and I know for many of us, this important policy decision is also a decision that is intertwined with the respect and admiration we have for our colleagues. I have great respect and admiration for both the senior and junior Senator from Nevada.

As some of you know, I spent a fair number of my years in the Navy, 5 years on active duty, another 18 years as a Reserve naval flight officer, most of that time on airplanes but other times on ships. I have been on ships that are nuclear powered. They included aircraft carriers and submarines. I have known hundreds of people who lived many years of their lives on nuclear-powered vessels. When you have that kind of background, you are maybe more comfortable with nuclear power than those who have not literally lived on a floating nuclear power plant.

I acknowledge there are a lot of people who have legitimate concerns about the various aspects of nuclear power--a few of them have been pretty well vetted here today. One of them is transportation: how to move this nuclear waste through dozens of States and do so safely, especially in an age of terrorism.

There are concerns about the terrorists themselves and whether or not they might strike, either at a site such as Yucca Mountain or at a barge or a railroad or a highway.

Before I served in the Senate a year and a half ago, I served as Governor of Delaware. During those years, I became all the more mindful of the transportation of hazardous waste through my State and alongside my State via the Delaware River and the bay which divides the State of the Presiding Officer and my State. Every day hazardous materials make their way up and down the Delaware River. Throughout DI-95/I-495, which crosses my State and the railroads of my State, the Norfolk Southern and CSX, we have dangerous materials every day traverse throughout Delaware--sometimes hazardous materials, sometimes explosive materials. We have learned to deal with them and deal with them safely. In Europe, they have shown a record over time of being able to transport nuclear waste in a way that is safe as well.

I know people who are concerned about nuclear power because of the possibility there will be an accident at a nuclear power plant. I acknowledge those concerns are not illegitimate. The safety record of the nuclear

power industry has been better in the last 10 years than probably in all the years before, and it continues to improve.

While I acknowledge, on the one hand, the legitimate concerns about nuclear power being a viable, growing part of the generation of electricity in our country, I want to talk briefly about the virtues, the advantages of nuclear power. We had a great debate on energy policy over the earlier part of this year. We talked about the growing demand, the rise in price of foreign oil, now up 50 percent. We talked about the huge and growing trade deficit we have in this country, over \$300 billion last year, maybe \$400 billion this year, and a significant part of that is oil imports.

I think we have begun a serious discussion and debate about what to do with respect to air emissions, how we can curtail sulfur dioxide, mercury, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen oxide from power plants in this country and other sources.

Nuclear power, whether we like it or not, does not create sulfur dioxide emissions. It doesn't create mercury emissions. It doesn't create nitrogen oxide emissions. It doesn't create carbon dioxide emissions--it doesn't contribute to those. With respect to our environment and the quality of our air, I think nuclear power is, if anything, a friend.

I, as have a number of my colleagues, had a chance to go to Yucca Mountain. I visited the place. I talked to people who

worked on that project for any number of years. I met with people in Nevada who oppose the designation of Yucca Mountain and those who favor it. I have had the opportunity along with many of my colleagues to participate in hours of hearings and other meetings with advocates and opponents of designating Yucca Mountain and licensing Yucca Mountain.

In the end it comes down to maybe two votes: one, a procedural vote as to whether or not we are going to vote to proceed to the final vote and that is one that would carry on to the licensing of Yucca Mountain. I said to my colleagues on the Energy Committee a month or so ago, I have agonized with this vote probably as much as any in my memory, trying to do, on the one hand, what I think is the right thing for my country and trying to treat my dear colleagues the way I would want to be treated. It is a tough call. It is tough for me and I know it is for many of us.

We have two votes. On the first vote, on the motion to proceed, if my vote is needed--and I am going to stand in the well there--if my vote is needed in order to be able to proceed to the final vote, I will vote yes--if my vote is needed.

On the final vote, if the motion to proceed is approved, I will vote yes on the designation of Yucca Mountain.

With that, I thank the deputy majority leader for yielding his time to me.